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Classified By: Political Counselor Mary T. Curtin for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (U) Summary: The Polish Parliament voted to dissolve itself by a wide majority on September 7, setting the stage for early elections. President Kaczynski as expected set the election date for October 21. The political fur is already flying in what is expected to be a brutal campaign. Civic Platform (PO) leader Donald Tusk crowed that "we have forced the capitulation of Jaroslaw Kaczynski," and his party is expected to focus on the disarray and incompetence of the Kaczynski government. Law and Justice (PiS) seeks to cast the election as a stark choice between those who fight corruption versus those who accept it, with a strong underlying message that they are the only party that will go after rich elites. In so doing they hope to simultaneously attack the two largest opposition parties. While PO leads in most polls, PiS has a record of effective (if nasty) campaigning. As reported earlier, no party is expected to win a majority, and whichever wins will face tough choices in building a governing coalition. While domestic issues will dominate, foreign policy issues of concern to the U.S. will be part of the campaign. End Summary
Jarek Kaczynski: "I am the Minister of Everything"

12. (U) As expected, the Polish Sejm voted to dissolve itself two years ahead of schedule, forcing new parliamentary elections that have been set for October 21. The vote was a comfortable majority of 377 to 54, with 20 abstentions. As expected, PiS, PO, the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and the Peasant's Party (PSL) supported the motion, and only Self Defense (SO) and the League of Polish Families (LPR) opposed the measure. The vote came only after hours of nasty debate over the nearly two years of PiS government, with accusations flying from leading opposition parties and PiS's former coalition partners over the conduct of government, and from PiS about corruption it sees all around.

13. (U) Prime Minister Kaczynski's first move, coming only 15 minutes after the vote, was to dismiss all his ministers in order to deprive the opposition of the opportunity to engage in a potentially damaging Sejm debate on PO's separate motions of no confidence in individual cabinet ministers. With the minister now simply "acting," and PM Kaczynski declaring himself "the Minister of Everything," the no confidence resolutions are moot. Kaczynski subsequently reappointed Foreign Minister Anna Fotyga (although the opposition has questioned the legality of the move since Fotyga, who was at an EU Ministerial Meeting in Portugal at the time, did not meet the constitutional requirement that she be physically present in Poland at the time of the

appointment), and Transport Minister Jerzy Polaczek. There are conflicting reports over whether or not more (re)appointments will be forthcoming.

Tusk: We Have Forced Kaczynski to Capitulate

¶4. (C) The campaign, which is expected to be nasty, began before the dissolution vote was even finished. PO leader Donald Tusk crowed that "we have forced the capitulation of Jaroslaw Kaczynski," to loud applause. Tusk has vowed to run as a candidate from Warsaw (rather than his hometown of Gdansk) to face off directly against PM Kaczynski. PO has also offered a number of PiS luminaries, including former PM Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz and former MOD Radek Sikorski, a place on PO's roster of candidates. Leader of the Polish Senate Bogdan Boruszewicz -- nominally an independent, but closely associated with PiS and the Kaczynskis in the last election -- has announced he will jump to PO and run for the Parliament as its lead candidate in Gdansk. PO shadow foreign minister Bronislaw Komorowski told visiting EUR A/S Dan Fried September 8 that PO will focus its campaign against (1) PiS's handling of foreign policy, arguing that Poland needs to be a player in the EU if it is to benefit from EU membership; (2) the inadequacies in the health care system, arguing PiS has done nothing to improve it; and (3) against the general ineffectiveness of the tumultuous Kaczynski governing style.

¶5. (C) The Left and Democrats (LiD), which brings together the post-communist Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) and a small group of post-Solidarity leftists, will, as former defense minister Jerzy Szmajdzinski told us, bring out former President Aleksandr Kwasniewski to spearhead its campaign. LiD hopes to build on Kwasniewski's still high opinion poll ratings and his effective foreign policy leadership. Press reports indicate that LiD will not allow former Prime

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Minister Leszek Miller, back onto the parliamentary lists despite his declared interest. Miller's government collapsed in 2004 over charges of corruption and cronyism that nearly destroyed SLD, and LiD does not want give PiS such an easy campaign target.

PiS Steps Up to Fight the "Aristocrats"

¶6. (C) Corruption will be the focus of the PiS campaign, and PM Kaczynski came out swinging this weekend, aiming most of his criticism at Kwasniewski and the former SLD government, but including PO in the blasts. Kaczynski has a double barreled message, aimed at each of the main opposition parties. "You are," he said, "either for fighting corruption, or one of those not interested in fighting corruption." PiS will paint LiD as the successor of the corruption-ridden SLD government and (as it did in 2005) PO as arrogant elites who are not interested in regular Poles. As presidential media advisor Michal Kaminski told us, PiS believes its detention of former Minister of Interior Kaczmarek and dramatic revelation of his links to wealthy businessman Ryszard Krauze resonate with many Poles who believe the wealthy got that way only because of corruption. Meeting with A/S Fried on September 7, former PM and Polish Peasants Party (PSL) chief Waldemar Pawlak said that his own father was delighted with the Krauze investigation, because it proved that someone was finally going after the "aristocracy." The PiS government will likely make more announcements in those investigations and has promised a long-overdue report on alleged links between the former Military Intelligence Service (WSI) and corrupt businessmen, which it will use to stoke its campaign.

¶7. (C) The first polls released after the dissolution bear out Kaminski's claims, showing PiS evenly matched against PO (33 percent each), with a resurgent LiD (16 percent). The

faltering PSL is at five percent, presumably pulling away support from SO which is below the parliamentary threshold. LPR surprisingly polled at six percent, thus above the threshold, on the basis of a political partnership with another nationalist micro-party, the "Union of Real Politics." (The SO-LPR coalition announced in July is apparently dead.) The election is essentially PO's to lose, but it has proven adept at doing just that, squandering a sizable lead in the 2005 elections, and offering little beyond "not being PiS" so far in this campaign season. PiS may achieve its goal of devouring its rivals--and former coalition partners--on the right, by knocking out SO and, potentially, LPR. PiS strategists like Kaminski are confident that its campaign messages PiS's core voters in rural Poland, and that they will continue to vote in higher percentages than PO's younger, wealthier, and better educated potential voters. PO's challenge will be to convince these potential voters to get to polls, which they did not do in 2005.

MD Unlikely to be Politicized, but "Don't Hand us a Fait Accompli"

18. (C) Comment: Electoral lists will not be completed until late September, and it is too early to predict how effective the campaigns of the various parties will be, but it is almost certain that no party will win a majority, meaning either another minority government or another round of difficult coalition government negotiations. As we have noted before, the focus will be almost entirely on domestic politics, especially the conduct of the PiS government, but issues of concern to the U.S., including Missile Defense, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Poland's role in Europe, will be on the table. In their meetings with A/S Fried, opposition (SLD, PSL, and PO) leaders said they did not intend to make Missile Defense a campaign theme, but asked that a new Polish government not be presented a fait accompli. A/S Fried reassured them that the negotiations were ongoing, but would not finish before the October 21 elections. We have already seen some willingness to try to criticize the government on the management of Polish deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, which are widely opposed by the Polish public. In a closely fought campaign there is some chance that these issues might surface more seriously in the cat fight between the parties.

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